



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 10, 2014

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Desert Soul and Development Communication with PEPFAR Showcase an HIV Prevention Musical

Desert Soul Health and Development Communication will perform Wize Up - a musical April 10, 2014 to raise awareness about preventing HIV/AIDS and promoting HIV testing and counseling. The musical, to take place at the University of Namibia's Space Theatre, is the finale of the organization's youth campaign on HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health rights. The show aims to make learners aware of the dangers of multiple partners and sugar daddies.

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) funded this program. PEPFAR is a U.S. Government initiative which saves the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS and prevents new infections. It is the largest commitment by any nation to combat a single disease internationally. PEPFAR/Namibia is driven by the priorities and needs of the Namibian government and a shared responsibility among partners to make strategic investments for HIV/AIDS activities. Jennifer Nield, the PEPFAR coordinator in Namibia, says *"PEPFAR is proud to partner with Desert Soul for this*



exciting program by giving N\$200,000 to promote prevention and awareness of HIV/AIDS.”

This musical and one-year program funded by PEPFAR established a drama group that made 60 performances in Windhoek schools. One of the beneficiaries of the program says: *‘I loved the HIV campaign we did at Polytechnic, because I got to interact with my peers and people that are almost at the same understanding as I, so it was like having a constructive debate with the people that are mostly affected by the topics we had at hand.’*

Desert Soul developed its youth campaign based on research highlighting young people’s vulnerability to sexual and reproductive health risks. The study, part of the PEPFAR grant to Desert Soul, showed that Namibian youth understand the severity of the HIV epidemic, but still do not use condoms consistently. These findings align with national statistics that illustrate continued risky sexual behaviors among Namibian youth. For example, 64% of youth 15-19 years old have never used contraceptives, and consequently 13% of youth had a baby or were pregnant (DHS 2006).

Desert Soul will continue activities with support from the World Health Organization to carry out a road show in the Kavango Region, run an HIV prevention radio program and develop a youth booklet.

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